



The Biblioteca Nacional sponsors some entertaining pastimes for Aruba's elderly

This week is International Older People's Week, when we remember and pay homage to those remaining in the "older generation." Aruba's National Library, in cooperation with UNOCA and a number of the recognized poets and authors of the island conducted activities for the patients of Aruba's four old age homes. The centers for the elderly are under the supervision of the Stichting Algemene Bejaardensorge Aruba (SABA,) and those that reside at the Verpleegtehuis in San Nicolaas were treated to a morning of literature at the Old Cunucu House Restaurant in Palm Beach on Tuesday morning.

The morning began with a rendition of some of the works of Digna Lacle-Herrera, who is eighty-two and famous on the island for her Proverbs, which were published this past year for the first time. Reading her works was noted poetess Belen Kock-Marchena, who also recited her poetry for the gathering, and then performed with her husband, Dolph, a two-person comedy by Lacle-Herrera depicting a doctor and a very complaining patient. Dolph also read from the works of noted Curacao author Elis Juliana. Assisting them enthusiastically in this endeavor was their granddaughter Laura.

Particularly touching and a highlight of the morning for the gathering was Belen Kock-Marchena's heartfelt recitation of her poem "Cuido" ("Care"), which was inspired by her own feelings and experiences of taking care of her mother at the age of ninety-two, a woman who had given birth to and raised six daughters and four sons.

"Cuido" (translated from the original Papiamentu)

I heard my mother murmuring;
"Please take me to my mother."

I wondered-"Is she confused
Or must I accept that she is seeing her death?"

I do not want to see the light go out in her eyes;
Because her love for us keeps our family together.

Mami-now it is my turn to take care of you;
So come, let us put on your nightgown,
Let us powder you so you smell nice,
And as I sit at your feet,
Make a cross on my forehead with your thumb.

I know you want me to tell you goodnight....
(But I fear this may be the last goodnight.)

The restaurant then treated the gathering to a lovely lunch of all the traditional foods, such as bacalao with pan bati and funchi, and Soppi Carne, another favorite with the old timers. Yosmar Sneek, of the National Library commented that this morning was only one of several events that were being conducted around the island to stimulate and entertain the retirees of SABA. The motto of the Biblioteca Nacional is "Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body," and the elderly enjoyed the morning's workout immensely!